

Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1960) stated (for the northern Sudan) that it appeared to be extending its range, but this has not been borne out by observations since their book was written: there are no recent records of mass occurrence and only very small numbers winter uncommonly south of the Sahara.

The reasons for the change in status are not known and it is not clear whether, in fact, the species occurred in large numbers only in a few years.

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FURTHER NOTES ON BIRDS NEW OR LITTLE KNOWN IN THE SUDAN

During six years (1977-1983) of intensive study of birds in the Sudan, a number of birds were added to the country's avifauna (Nikolaus 1979a, b, 1981, 1982a, b). The final results of this work will be given in a distributional atlas for the country (using a 1-degree square mapping system) with notes on habitat and status (Nikolaus in prep.).

In the species list which follows, additions to the Sudan list are marked with an asterisk.

White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*

The rare occurrence in the extreme north is documented by Bowen (1926): a specimen was collected in December 1920 at Morghani Island, Dongola (c. 19.20N, 30.30E). No other records have been traced until the winter of 1982-83 when one was caught alive by local people near the Kashim el Girba dam/Atbara River (14.55N, 35.55E) in December 1982. A further 12 birds were seen near Port Sudan (19.37N, 37.12E) on 24 December 1982 by St. Paterson (*in litt.*).

*Hottentot Teal *Anas hottentota*

In the Khartoum Natural History Museum is a mounted specimen from Gogrial (8.32N, 28.05E), Bhar el Ghazal collected in 1956. Another recent sight rec-

ord of three birds in the spring of 1981 from Khartoum by A. Pettet and G. Lenton (pers. comm.) supports the idea that it occurs regularly as a non-breeding visitor in Sudan.

[*White-backed Duck *Thalassornis leuconotus*

This species has not been reported from the Sudan, even though it may be expected in the Sudd. There is, however, a mounted specimen in the Khartoum Natural History Museum (unfortunately without proper data) but, according to the label it was collected on the same 1956 expedition as the Hottentot Teal mentioned above.

Levant Sparrowhawk *Accipiter brevipes*

Since the Eurasian Sparrowhawk *A. nisus* is a regular winter visitor to northern Sudan, it is difficult to give clear information on the very similar Levant Sparrowhawk which had, hitherto, only been collected once in the Sudan (on the Boma Hills (6.10N, 34.30E) in late December 1936 Cave 1938).

Now there are two more recent observations: on 22 October 1982 D.J. Pearson and the author saw one male (with active primary moult) hunting around the netting site at Wad Medani (14.24N, 33.30E) along the Blue Nile. It could be separated from the Eurasian Sparrowhawk, which had been encountered regularly during the previous few days between the Red Sea Hills and Wad Medani, and the smaller Shikra *A. badius* by the grey cheeks and the very long pale underwings with very dark tips.

During the 1983 spring migration at Khor Baraka (18.03N, 37.30E) in the Tokar delta, Red Sea, single Eurasian Sparrowhawks passed through regularly in April. However, on 24 and 25 April 12 and 18 sparrowhawks passed, slowly circling in a tight flock low over the bush. Among the group of 18 were at least four adult male *A. brevipes* and it seems most likely that all belonged to this species, especially since they were migrating in such a different way from the *A. nisus* encountered previously.

Porter & Willis (1968) counted 5224 sparrowhawks on autumn passage at the Bosphorus, out of which probably 4000 were *A. brevipes*. They also noted the habit of migrating in flocks, in contrast to that of *A. nisus*.

Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*

Bowen (1926) stated that it was "rare on northern rivers" while Cave & MacDonald (1955) recorded it as "possibly not uncommon, particularly in coastal districts." Ash (1980) summarized all recently known records for eastern Africa and found nothing to add to these earlier statements for the Sudan.

Additional recent records are as follows:

coast: 1 on 29 October 1980 at Suakin (GN, pers. obs.)
1 November 1981 at Suakin (St. Paterson, *in litt.*)
1 September and October 1981 at Port Sudan (St. Paterson *in litt.*)

inland: 1 in October 1977 at the Jebel Aulia dam, White Nile (15.15N, 32.28E) (Pettet 1979) and one at the same place in January 1983 (GN, pers. obs.)

These records suggest that it is a regular but uncommon winter visitor along the Red Sea coast and up the Nile.

*Grey-headed Gull *Larus cirrocephalus*

Even though it is widely distributed in sub-Saharan Africa on larger inland waters, it has never been listed for the Sudan.

It was observed first on the Jebel Aulia dam, White Nile on 24 August 1981 by G. Lenton and the author, when two were encountered with a single Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*. The second record was of an adult in full breeding dress which was caught and ringed on 26 June 1982 on the White Nile

at Khartoum (15.35N, 32.30E) by the author.

The status of the species is still unknown but it is most likely that a few occur regularly in summer, while it is possible that in the past it had been confused with *L. ridibundus*.

**Mediterranean Gull Larus melanocephalus*

There are two recent sight records from the Red Sea coast: one was seen in April 1981 at Suakin by St. Paterson (*in litt.*), while another, in full breeding plumage was seen on 23 March 1983 at Port Sudan by the author.

There are no other records from the Red Sea (Cramp & Simmons 1983) but Britton (1980) gives two records from Kenya.

Lesser Crested Tern Sterna bengalensis

An adult (wing 298 mm, weight 160 g) which was caught and ringed at night on 26 June 1982 along the White Nile at Khartoum is the only inland record of this species which is, however, a common breeding bird on the Red Sea islands.

**Sooty Tern Sterna fuscata*

While the Bridled Tern *S. anaethetus* is a common breeder on the Sudan Red Sea islands, the very similar Sooty Tern had never been recorded. On 13 August 1982, near Mohamed Gol (20.53N, 37.07E), two adults were resting on coral a few metres off the shore together with up to ten adult White-eyed Gulls *Larus leucophthalmus*, which were about the same size as the terns. The large size and the very dark upperparts and pure white underparts separated them at once from the familiar Bridled Tern, several of which had been handled for ringing during the previous few days.

**Arctic Tern Sterna paradisaea*

Even more surprising than the inland Lesser Crested Tern mentioned above, was an adult Arctic Tern in full breeding dress caught and ringed at night on 16 May 1982 along the White Nile at Khartoum. The bird weighed 80 g and had a wing of 263 mm.

The Arctic Tern is an unaccountably rare bird in eastern Africa north of Zululand - where it is, however, common (Clancey 1964) - although there are recent records from Somalia, the first of which was also inland and also in May, on 23rd (Ash 1983).

**Iranian Irania gutturalis*

This species had been expected to occur on autumn passage during the ringing programme on the Red Sea coast since 1980 (Nikolaus 1983). According to Smith (1957) it is common in autumn to the southeast in the Eritrean hills. However, it was not until autumn 1983 that three birds were caught and ringed at Arba' at (19.48N, 37.03E), the first for the Sudan. The first two birds, in immature plumage, were caught on 7 and 17 August, and the third, an adult male, was caught on 5 September and stayed in the area until 14th increasing its weight from 19 to 21.5 g.

These few records show that the Sudan is northwest of its normal migration route from Asia Minor, via Arabia and Ethiopia to the East African winter quarters.

**Acrocephalus sp.*

A population of pale, grey, small acrocephaline warblers breeds in the coastal mangroves of the Sudan. These birds are probably the same as those mentioned by Smith (1964) from Eritrea, Ash (1977), also from Eritrea, and also noted by Fry, Williamson & Ferguson-Lees (1974). Seventeen specimens from Suakin are deposited in the Bonn and Stuttgart Museums and await further taxonomic study.

**Clamorous Reed Warbler Acrocephalus stentoreus*

Like the last species, this reed warbler also has a pale grey population confined to coastal mangroves along the Red Sea. Birds of this type are also mentioned by Smith (1961) from Eritrea and Ash (1983) has recently added the species to the Somalia avifauna.

Around Suakin it is common and probably resident. It breeds in spring. The wing moult is prolonged, from late July continuing at least until December. The wing-length ranges from 79 to 87 mm ($n = 14$) and the weight from 21 to 29 g.

**Grasshopper Warbler (eastern race) Locustella naevia straminea*

Records of the species in eastern Africa are few. Besides an extraordinary June record from Kenya (Fayad & Fayad 1977) it is only known from Ethiopia (Ash 1978) where it arrives in September.

The first record for the Sudan was on 18 August 1983 at Arba'at, when a first year female was caught and collected (now in the Stuttgart Museum). A second one caught at the same place on 21 September 1983 unfortunately escaped from the mist net before it could be handled. St. Paterson (*in litt.*) saw a small *Locustella* in March 1982 in low vegetation near Port Sudan which was thought to have been a Grasshopper Warbler.

Grey Hypocolius Hypocolius ampelinus

In Africa only recorded from Massawa (Ethiopia) in 1850 and from Jebel Elba (22.10N, 36.20E) in 1943.

In the early morning of 30 March 1983 during the first round of the mist nets at Khor Baraka, Tokor delta, a female Grey Hypocolius was seen sitting on a net pole. When disturbed it flew along the net and disappeared into thick bush. Earlier, A. Pettet (*pers. comm.*) saw one in November at Erkowit (18.46N 37.06E). Clearly this species is only a vagrant to the African Red Sea coast.

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LARGE NUMBERS OF BIRDS KILLED BY ELECTRIC POWER LINE

The harbour at Port Sudan receives its water from wells 25 km away to the northwest at Khor Arba'at. The pumps at the wells are electric and are connected to an overhead power line for which, over the last 10 km, metal poles are used. During my first visit at the beginning of September 1982, a few long-dead vultures (four Lappet-faced *Torgos tracheliotus* and several Egyptian *Neophron percnopterus*) were noticed near these poles. Three weeks later, on 2 October, this power line had killed a surprisingly large number of additional birds: three Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus*, at least 50 more Egyptian Vultures (about one under each pole) and a Brown-necked Raven *Corvus ruficollis*. All of them had been electrocuted by touching the wires while they perched on the poles.

When I visited the place again in March 1983 only three new dead birds were found - two Egyptian Vultures and a single Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*.

The large number of Egyptian Vultures killed in September 1982 could be evidence that the birds were migrants, not familiar with these power poles, which had arrived possibly from the Palaearctic. The disappearance of Egyptian Vultures from around Khartoum during the last 20 years could be explained by this phenomenon.

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